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## **There is no such thing as a journal paper**

**Sarah Gilmore and Nancy Harding<sup>1</sup>**

Gilmore, S. and Harding, N., 2018. There is no such thing as a journal paper. In N. Meier and E. Maslo (Eds). *Cultivating Creativity in Methodology and Research* (pp. 103-116). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Ford, Harding, Gilmore and Richardson's 'Becoming the leader: leadership as material presence', was accepted for publication in *Organization Studies* in late 2016. The paper conforms with the dominant format for academic journal papers. It outlines how the idea for the study on which the paper is based was arrived at, lists its aims and objectives, discusses its methodology and methods, has a long section labelled 'data analysis', a discussion that develops a theory arising out of the data analysis, and a short conclusion looking forward to future work. It gives the impression of a smooth passage from inception of an idea about a topic that needs to be researched through the fieldwork to the paper's publication. Because *Organization Studies* is listed as 4\* in the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) journal rankings list, a considerable proportion of the paper is devoted to the methodology of the study, and to its theoretical location. We are quite proud of these – we developed a method for interviewing people that helps them articulate abstract ideas, and we brought together new materialities theory, notably the work

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to acknowledge the central role played by Jackie Ford in this story. It has been published with her approval and we would like to state our gratitude to her for everything she has done and continues to do for our research, work more generally, and most of all, for her continued friendship

of Karen Barad, with psychoanalytical theory, through the work of Christopher Bollas.

But we do not say that we are proud nor, even in this age of mandatory reflexivity, is there any hint of the authors having hinterlands, or lives outside academia that might have impacted the development of these ideas or the ways by which they were realised in this work. Furthermore, the implicit claim of smooth transition from idea to publication is a blatant lie. To say that the paper smooths over a rather complex and bumpy path to the final, published version would be to engage in whatever is the opposite of hyperbole. Karen Barad's (2007) description of entities as enormously complex, mutually-constitutive entanglements is a better description of the processes that led to that paper's publication.

Table One shows the major deviations from the paper's claims. The column 'theory' summarises the birth myth that is implicit in the paper. The column 'practice' summarises the process that actually happened (although it may merely substitute one birth myth with another).

### **Birth myths**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Practice</b>
The study emerged out of an explicit set of aims and objectives.	JF* and NH had a vague idea they wished to explore – probably about a decade and more before the paper was actually published.
The aims and objectives were consistent throughout	They went through multiple versions, and the final version was influenced more than we had wished by reviewers' comments.
The theoretical perspective was chosen to reflect the issues the paper was exploring.	JF, SG and NH had a passion for Bollas's work and thought his ideas would help explore embodied appearance more than any other psychoanalytical theorist. Barad arrived on the scene very late – and

	were we to discuss her arrival we would be launched into another entanglement as complex as the one we report on here.
The methodology was designed with the aims of the study in mind.	True, but they were a mish-mash arrived at after frustration JF and NH experienced when using repertory grid techniques to support another colleague's research.
All four authors played an equal role.	True, but each had a different role: JF and NH initiated the study, SG rescued it after they had found it impossible to publish it; SR did the bulk of the fieldwork.
The paper was submitted to <i>Organization Studies</i> , where presumably it needed one or more revisions, before being accepted for publication.	The paper had been submitted to several journals, and several special editions. It has received several desk rejects, and several rejections after a first review. Sometimes this was because of weaknesses in the paper's draft, but as it became more refined rejection arose from reviewers coming from another discipline and palpably not understanding its approach. This continued with the revisions process and at times we felt embattled with reviewers seemingly misunderstanding our intentions.

\* Key: JF = Jackie Ford; SG = Sarah Gilmore, NH = Nancy Harding, SR = Sue Richardson.

Those are the most obvious differences between the impression the paper gives and what happened 'off-stage' as the paper was written. But this is far too simplistic a summary of the paper's evolution from idea to publication. Here we would have liked to use a diagram of its 'entangled genealogies', similar to the one Barad (2007, p. 389) draws. Each node in that diagram should lead to another node, and another and another, all diverting from each other and coming together. But the limitations of the printed page suggests it is better if we tell you a story. In what follows Sarah's account is in Avenir Medium Oblique Font and Nancy's in Apple Chancery.

But the following accounts are not in date order: that would impose a linearity on events that would betray the arguments we are developing. Note how some of the memories overlap but in others you would hardly think that the two of us had shared the same experience.

### November 2015

It's cold. Nancy and Jackie are at my house for a short stay - to do some work on the paper and to lead a seminar at my Subject Group the next day. It is also Nancy's birthday. My old house. I have a sense of nostalgia for its Victorian beauty: the high ceilings, the gorgeous ceiling roses and the original shutters that divide the 35-foot room. But it's a cold snap and I'm concerned that they aren't too cold or uncomfortable on the sofa they're sharing...the one I was able to afford through putting a large bet on Roger Federer winning Wimbledon.

We are at a crisis point in the data analysis and it's infuriating. We are so close to getting to the intricate knot at the heart of the piece but it's evading our recognition. Papers are all over the floor and there are books all over my sofa. Jackie finds a review of Bollas' work which we pore over in detail. I don't remember what happened next but apparently, I noticed something in the data - I think that it was a repetition in the language one of the respondents used. The way she described herself as a person; how she dressed, how she felt she was as a leader...and the images she selected of potentially excellent leaders. A mirroring was going on; a recognition that seems to be at the heart of our research. The ideal leader? It's me.

We then celebrated Nancy's birthday. There's a somewhat grainy photo of us taken at Loch Fyne and it's beautiful. We look flushed with wine, happiness, relief and pride.

What a wonderful excuse to get together with Sarah and work on the Bollas paper - Jackie and I had been invited to give a paper at Portsmouth Business School where Sarah then worked, and we extended our stay (courtesy of Sarah's spare bedrooms in her lovely terraced house) so we could work on the Bollas paper. What was it about that paper that we weren't seeing, despite poring over the transcripts very many times? We sat in Sarah's living room and went through two of the transcripts paragraph by paragraph, over and over. Sarah noticed something - aha, a breakthrough moment. Jackie noticed something - wow, we're on a roll now. I must have noticed something but I can't remember what. Sarah, if I remember correctly, noticed that each interviewee's

description of themselves matched their description of their imagined ideal leader. We pored over Bollas's books, exploring how to account for what we knew when we checked the other transcripts: the description of the self matched the description of the ideal leader in all the transcripts. It was only later that we realised that we needed a theory of materialities (we found it in Karen Barad's work) in order to account for embodiment (reviewers said the paper was not concerned with aesthetics but embodiment, but another reviewer said the body was absent from the paper - the paper evolved accordingly). After a day of intense poring over transcripts we were saturated with attempts at thinking. It was my birthday - we went for dinner at a rather nice restaurant, and drank champagne. The weather was frosty.

### July 1999 (or was it 1998?)

I don't remember ever being so wet. Or quite so lost. And in some ways the physical sense of dislocation reflected my internal state of disorientation. This was my first scholarly conference and I had dropped off my suitcase at the halls of residence where I was staying. In doing so, I met Nancy for the first time - as she was also staying in the flat. We both agreed to walk to the conference venue and we ventured forth. I don't remember if we had a map and I think that we had maybe just one umbrella but it might have been no umbrella and no map and we certainly had no sense of direction.

Ostensibly you might think that a rainy walk to a conference wouldn't combine well with a process of getting to know someone and their research, but you (and I) would be wrong. I remember us stopping a lot. Partly because we were lost but also out of a sense of intellectual recognition...you do this?! Oh! Wow! Who is this author? And how are you using their work? Which book? Is there a paper you'd recommend? So, there was a double sense of getting lost: both geographically and in an unfolding of ideas as well as an unfolding of us.

The next day I met Jackie. One thing you need to know about Jackie is that she can map read. In years and conferences to come, Nancy and I learn to leave this task to her and follow in her elegant, assured wake.

Until I learned that it is okay to be alone, I hated going to conferences by myself. Technically I wasn't alone at the SCOS conference in Edinburgh as Jackie was there, but with her new baby, young daughter and her husband, and staying in non-conference accommodation. We would meet to present our paper but for very little else (the conference paper had been conceived while Jackie was heavily pregnant with

Michael, who is now 17). I was staying in student accommodation that comprised bedrooms around a communal kitchen. I wandered into the kitchen, or I think I did, and got into conversation with a woman who was staying in the same set of rooms. Sarah, she said her name was. We were both nervous about being unable to find the conference venue the next day, so set off in search of it. It was raining, and it was cold. We chatted non-stop, in that 'getting to know you' type of chatter. Later, we went into Edinburgh and found a rather lovely restaurant, with wood-panelled walls. We talked a lot. Jackie and I were presenting our paper in the form of a play but we needed a third person to act the role of Mephistopheles/the organization, while Jackie and I played Faustus/the employee and Marlow/the Author. I remember it working so well that people came up to Sarah to congratulate her on her Mephistopheles. After that we bumped into each other at conferences on several occasions but it took about a decade for acquaintanceship to grow into friendship, and then friendship into co-authoring. Meanwhile, Jackie and I, both then working at Leeds University, started work on 'the Bollas' paper, which was intended to be a study of the aesthetics of leadership, with the interview materials analysed through the theoretical lens of psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas. We carried out the pilot interviews in c. 2003. Jackie is an expert in critical leadership studies, and I'd been introduced to Bollas's work by a doctoral student of mine, Kavi Vadamootoo, who I'd met while I worked at Swansea University. Kavi is an art therapist and how I ended up supervising his thesis is another long story. Flash forward 20+ years. Without Sarah's input 'the Bollas paper' would not have been published. Jackie and I had presented it at several workshops for psychotherapists and had a warm reception each time; someone at one of these workshops sent the paper to Christopher Bollas, who contacted us to say how much he liked it. But we could not get it published in academic journals. Sarah brought a different energy that revived the paper. So in some ways the paper's conception occurred at Leeds University, but its long gestation started in Swansea University in 1995, or in the NHS where Jackie first became interested in leadership research, or in Edinburgh where we met Sarah, or in Bradford where Jackie and I were working when we finally wrote the paper. There was no pristine conception and birth. Without Kavi's input we would not have heard about Bollas. Without Jackie's already ploughing a deep furrow in critical leadership studies we would not have been exploring leadership. There was no logical arrival at a

decision of a topic that needed researching, a literature search, fieldwork, data analysis, etc. but rather a number of threads that became woven together in an 'ha ha' moment when we said 'let's look at ....'.

### July 2016

I'm sitting on the floor of a student bedroom. I can't remember if there is a radiator - if there was, then that might explain why I'm sitting on the floor as I remember the rain and damp of Keele and my teenage habits of sitting on my bedroom floor seeking the warmth of a radiator whilst doing my homework. We are working through a second set of 'revise and resubmit' requirements. As such it feels a bit tense because a lot will rest on what we decide to do today.

There's an odd smell in the room. Although Jackie has sprayed the room with scent - which is gorgeous - there's an underlying hum of socks, sweat and a general sense of being unkempt. Stuffy with the undertow of teenager. It feels lonely as all identifiers of previous occupants have gone leaving me with a sense of absent presences and an underlying sense of sadness...Nancy insists on breaks for tea as we try to tease out what we need to do with these revisions. I am grateful for this. The room is dark, bleak and uncomfortable. Jackie is sitting on her bed but shifts position regularly - there's a sense of no physical comfort to be found here. Our work takes hours. It's painstaking, slow but I feel a real sense of relief when there's a set of actions against each editorial requirement. It's there. It has to be there. We discuss what we're going to do once the conference is over. It feels as though it must be the end of the R&R journey but there is the lingering feeling that it might not be and that acceptance is not inevitable. I'm tired. It's been a long week of writing retreat organisation/participation and the forthcoming co-convening of a gorgeous stream so I don't want to go out for dinner.

It is a very wet summer, this summer of 2016. We are at the Gender Work and Organization conference at Keele University. Sarah and I have come from a writing retreat we organised in a rather lovely boutique hotel 20 miles away. It's just after the Brexit vote, and that shock to the system is followed by this shock to the system - we're now staying in student accommodation and eating mass-produced food. And it's raining. And raining even more. Jackie arrives and we 'enjoy' a very mediocre lunch. But there are people here we haven't seen for ages and there is a lot of laughter. Rain and laughter, and a very good conference stream with thoughtful, innovative papers and an attentive, supportive audience. But first we have to work on the second revise and resubmit for the Bolas/Barad paper. We'd sent it to a four-star journal in 2015 that had sent it for review to psychologists who couldn't understand a paper that focused on examining individuals 'in their complex singularity'



rather than as 'samples of larger groups in some presupposed classificatory system' (Sanger, 1996, p. 20). After that rejection we submitted the paper to *Organization Studies* without further ado. It was sent to reviewers sympathetic to qualitative research methods and the application of theory. We had dealt with the first 'revise and resubmit' but the second one still required some rather tricky thinking. We gathered in Jackie's room in the student accommodation, bringing mugs of tea from our rooms. Jackie's room smelt of men's socks. She'd opened the windows and sprayed some rather expensive perfume, but the smell of stale socks seemed to have penetrated into the fabric of the room. There was only one chair - Sarah sat on the floor, Jackie on the bed, and I took the one chair (well, I'm the oldest and creakiest, after all!) Lord but the discussion about how to respond to the reviewers was torturous. I'd laboured long and hard at a writing retreat over a particular section that I really loved - the problem is that no-one could understand it except me. It had to go. We worked out what we needed to do in response to the latest reviews, shared out the work between us, worked out a timetable, and got on with being at a conference. I can still smell the stale socks. But the paper has been published - where can we find another bottle of champagne?

So a paper that gives a sense of its having had a gestation of just a few years has evolved over at least ten years. But none of it would have happened if events that had occurred up to 20 years ago had not congealed, in circumstances that were somehow conducive to their meeting. But there is another timeline to the development of this paper and it could go something like this:

1993-1995	<p>NH is working in Swansea University where she is asked to take over supervision of a small group of M.Sc students studying a programme in psychotherapy. One of them, art psychotherapist Kavi Vadamootoo, will become her Ph.D student. He is an object relations theorist and he introduces her to the work of Christopher Bollas.</p> <p>JF is working in the NHS in Leeds, developing close contacts with Leeds University, and starting to explore leadership;</p> <p>SG is working as a National Officer for the public sector union, Nalgo. During this period the organisation underwent a merger with two other</p>
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	<p>health service unions, Nupe and Cohse. Life is therefore lived as a tale of two halves: getting to know a highly bureaucratic, masculinist organisation and then being plunged into a new, emerging one which was mired in politicking, backstabbing and betrayal. She was also undergoing analysis in the wake of a serious period of depression.</p>
1996	<p>SG got married in May on a glorious early summer's day. She had started working as a PTHP lecturer in Southampton – a baptism of fire but with friendly people – and was fleshing out ideas for her PhD. The union movement was left behind which puzzled the academics she encountered who assumed that her nascent thinking would involve employee relations contributions.</p> <p>After a traumatic divorce NH, floundering, not knowing who she is as a single person rather than part of a couple, moves to Leeds and meets JF who promptly disappears on maternity leave. After her return, they become firm friends and colleagues. LOTS of discussions ensue (and continue daily). At some point they start studying the merger of two hospitals, which leads them to</p>
1999	<p>The SCOS conference in Edinburgh. Paths converge – SF, NH and JF meet for the first time.</p>
2000-2009	<p>JF and NH start what they call 'the Bollas study', but we can't remember when. All we know is that we had carried out pilot interviews before 2007. Either one or both of them keep bumping into SG at conferences. Her PhD was awarded in 2001 and she has a permanent academic job. By 2006 she also has a MSc in psychoanalytic theory. She reads her decree absolute just before one of the last seminars at UCL with a sense of surprise and relief. A friendship emerges, and loose plans to write something together are floated.</p>
2009-2014	<p>JF and NH now working at Bradford, where SR joins them as a researcher. She carries out more interviews for 'the Bollas paper'. JF and NH, both promoted to professor during this period, analyse the empirical materials, and draft several versions of a paper. Psychotherapists seem to love it, but no journal in MOS will accept it – it is either desk rejected or rejected by reviewers. Meanwhile, other papers and some books get written.</p> <p>SG is coming to the close of data gathering at her two ethnographic organisations and after a spate of good papers, the well runs dry through over-ambition and a focus on 4* US journals. Consulting within the football world also gradually comes to an end as frustration with the industry overwhelms the fiscal and intellectual rewards it brings.</p>
2010	<p>While SG and NH are each working on solo papers (that never got published) they hear that someone has plagiarised bits of a paper by SG and smaller bits of a paper by NH. What a coincidence! If plagiarists can do</p>

	it, why can't we? At last, friendship turns into collegueship as we jointly battle editors of journals who are reluctant to act against the plagiarists. They start working on combining SG's 'Did you bring your boots?' and NH's 'Surprised into Gender' (the latter became a chapter in Harding [2013] after it had been rejected by several journals). (After several rejections of the joint paper, we asked Jackie to join us and 'Surprised out of our Boots' is now out for review.)
2013	At the Academy of Management in Florida – JF can't make it; the Disneyworld venue is awful but SG and NH have a whale of a time at what is possibly the worst conference in the history of the AOM. Is the Bollas paper raised at this conference? We can't remember. An abiding memory is an evening stroll to buy a bottle of wine. We are accompanied by Mark Learmonth as we stroll through family groups enjoying the warm evening with a gaggle of adults and children flopped on large cushions watching 'The Aristocats' projected onto a large sheet. Children splash in a nearby pool. We find a quiet spot and enjoy our wine (and some cheese we'd 'exported' (i.e. shoplifted) from a journal reception). Another is of finding a bench near to the automatic doors into the conference venue: we hog it, because just as we are starting to feel too hot the doors open and a blast of cold, hyper-air-conditioned air rushes out and over us. We started discussing the potential of a paper on 'the male gaze' which hasn't got any further but SG religiously purchased GQ every month for some time as a form of data collection. She develops a desire for impeccable tailoring which is yet to be realised.
2014	JF and NH at EGOS in Montreal revive 'the Bollas paper', now calling it 'Embodied Selves and the Aesthetics of Leadership'. (Was this where we came up with the brilliant, amazing idea to ask Sarah, who has a background in psychoanalytical theory, to join us on this paper?) Neither can remember.
Was it 2015?	NH: What was the date of first meeting in Leeds to discuss the Bollas paper????? SG: no idea. I have no memory of being asked to get involved! I do remember being taken to the Hepworth Gallery, Leeds Art Gallery and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park once Nancy realised that I get all my best ideas at galleries and gardens. A rambling walk in Edinburgh without a sense of direction has, over time, become mirrored in other walks without a sense of direction or map. It is as if getting temporarily lost is not only a feature of our relationship but of how ideas emerge, take some shape and frequently disappear into the ether until we 'need' them or until the 'need' becomes too much to keep 'inside'.

## Conclusion

There may be many colleagues across management and business schools whose papers emerge as the myth suggests they should, through the maligned act of 'gap-spotting' (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013), or from the realisation that little is known about something, somewhere, that we need to know more about. For such researchers, a logical process of the sort laid out in research methods textbooks, may follow. But for us, and we suspect for many others, that process [*excuse me: toilet break*] is mythical, a fantasy, one we strive to achieve but never do. Rather, we retrospectively impose logical, rational, rule-conforming processes upon our papers and books as we write them. We may write that we have [*oops: must email Jayne to book a room*] spotted a gap in the literature, but the action is the reverse: we have an idea and then find a theoretical or practice gap into which we can slot it.

The origination of the idea may be a mystery – it may seem to have popped out of plain air and into conscious sensibility one day, or a conversation may have sparked a thought, likewise something in the media [*on which, email SG. She's just asked when is Game of Thrones next season due to air?*], an observation of everyday life, a book or a paper (or several or dozens) read. Bollas (1993; 1995) would suggest it comes from 'objects' we observe that become absorbed into numerous tracks of thought that somehow come together [*now that's an interesting idea: is the computer screen an object because I don't really see it when I'm writing, only the writing*]. The unconscious may no doubt influence the process. 'Life' influences the process.

In fact, you could argue that life does far more than that and arguably *is* the process thus making something of a mockery of the accounts we give in methodology

sections. If life influences or *is* the process, it is also inherently linked to time. It is very clear that the paper we feature had a lengthy gestation. Whilst it was accepted at the end of 2016, its tendrils go back decades before that. Even if we apply the scalpel to the intra-actions that inform it and view the starting point as that of the data collection, it took over 15 years from 'start' to publication. In the era of research assessment exercises which are increasingly propelling us to 'publish or perish', this seems a relic of a by-gone era. Reading our account, the time we took makes us look almost frivolous in our use of time, but we would argue that ideas take the time they take because they are also predicated and imbricated with the formation of the relationships which foster and nurture them.

Our thoughts, after drawing on Barad's work for the 'Barad/Bollas' paper, is that her thesis has a certain magnetic attraction for academics because, in its descriptions of a profoundly complex and messy world, it reflects the profound messiness of our research/writing/lives/thoughts/bodies/relationships/homes. She says, in effect: it's okay if your research doesn't follow the rational and logical processes [*I need a bowl of soup – my stomach is rumbling and stopping me thinking*] the textbooks tell you it should, because research and writing, just like 'life', are performatively constituted through multitudinous 'intra-actions that reconstitute entanglements' (Barad, 2007, p 74). To paraphrase the Barad/Bollas paper, the neologism 'intra-actions' captures the idea that research, papers and books are not ontologically separable – each and every piece of research and writing is constituted within and through its meeting with numerous other objects, events, people, experiences, happenstances, accidents, strategies, and so. There is no such thing as a singular

paper or book or research project, but rather each is an amalgam of so many things. There is, in short, no such thing as a journal paper either; rather there is a fantasy of a 4\* journal paper that beats us up, governs our careers, controls and subordinates us. But set against this fantasy is our paean to friendship and the detours, relationships, ideas and personal support that academic work needs to nourish it. That's life, after all .....

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